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MEMORANDUM

Date: March 7, 2006

To: Parks and Recreation Department Commissioners

From: William C. Scalzo, Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'WCS', is written over the 'From' line.

Re: **Director's Summary of Current Events**

Listed below are issues that the department has been involved with since the February 14, 2006 Director's Summary.

Superintendent Report

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area (SCRCA): Kevin Smith has been hired as the new Spur Cross Interpretive Ranger. Kevin comes to Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department with 10 years experience managing the ethno botany trail at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix.

The Sonoran Arts League has approached and requested to perform a community service project on the SCRCA by painting a large desert mural in order to reduce the visual intrusion created by our field office-storage trailer. The layout is currently occurring and we will receive the excellent commercial quality art service at no charge.

John Gunn has coordinated with staff of the Tonto National Forest to tap in to their expertise on how to deal with a significant noxious weed infestation (Star Thistle) that is occurring on the Conservation Area. John is hopeful the forest, the county, and ASU will partner in the treatment and assessment of the methods used in combating this menace.

The department was represented by John Gunn, SCRCA Supervisor, at the Cave Creek Town Council meeting of January 13, 2006 and spoke in favor of the town dedicating public easements to the Black Mountain summit property. The council was split 3x3 until the Mayor broke the impasse and provided the vote necessary to usher in a new era for this mountain and the public.

Consensus has been reached on a number of key issues including our desire to cooperate on a joint use facility for the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area which will likely include the Cave Creek Museum, infrastructure planning regarding the Phoenix Mine site, access issues regarding private holdings on the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area, and our preferred next step in our joint desire to resolve the Seven Springs water diversion issue.

John Gunn and Jonathan Blyler attended and contributed to the second meeting of the Northern Maricopa County Open Space Initiative.

The hosts of Estrella Park were lead on an interpretive hike at Spur Cross as a token of our appreciation for their many efforts.

The County Public Information Officer taped a session with Chairman Stapley at the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area on February 28, 2006.

Usery Mountain Regional Park: The Park has been busy this February with increased day-use and camping over January. The campers are very happy with the new electrical and water outfitting in their campsites and we are happy to report no water leaks in the campground for quite some time now. Ken Mouw recently reported success with the City of Mesa Utilities Committee approving our request for Mesa water. This will allow us to discontinue use of the water tanks at the park and provide a better quality of water for our users. This will also help us cut down on water leaks on the east end of the park coming over from Meridian Road.

Over the Presidents Day holiday Usery Mountain Regional Park was the place to be in the East Valley for camping, hiking and picnicking. The Wind Cave Trail was very busy with lots of families, similar to a Thanksgiving weekend. Pass Mountain had a significant number of hiking clubs taking advantage of the longer mileage trail.

The interpretive ranger, Amy Roberts, has had continued success with the "Find the Ranger" program on the Wind Cave Trail. The public loves it and we are using volunteers for this program as well. The public has also grabbed onto the "fitness challenge" hike series that culminates with the Pass Mountain Trail with gusto. Amy Roberts started "Stop Smoking-Start Hiking" hikes in which she invited Laurie Thomas from Community Health Promotions to come along on to give an introduction about tobacco education and hand out water bottles. Laurie and Amy actually met recently on the Wind Cave Trail during "Find the Ranger". The "Stop-Smoking" hike had about 15 hikers some of which were smokers and we are continuing to offer it this month. The old standards that are always good for programs for Usery Park like the full moon hikes and star-gazing continue to produce wonderful numbers; the valley residents just love to come out at night!

Jennifer Johnston, Park Supervisor and Joe Balengee, Eastside Trail Planner, met recently on the concern of the increasing number of unlawful trails in Usery Mountain Regional Park. They went over the park visitor's map and confirmed a number of the trails on that map. They are ordering "Stay on Designated Trails" signs and will be installing those on a number of the trails. The park staff will be conducting some rehab on some entry areas of those trails as well. The supervisor will also be closing the trails that are coming out of neighbors homes through the fences as best as can be kept up with. The MCSO Trails Division deputies are aware of this and an effort is being made between all staff and the deputies.

White Tank Regional Park: White Tank Regional Park Supervisor Don Harris participates in meetings with the West Valley Recreation Services Committee. The west valley Maricopa County Parks are now participating in the "Passport Program". This program has multiple advertising and web links throughout the valley that give details about upcoming events. Several Maricopa County Parks and Recreation events are listed. Public participants can have their brochure ("Passport") stamped and can qualify for prizes. There has been great cooperation and success between the cities, Maricopa County Parks and Recreation and Luke Air Force Base. We have received positive public feedback.

The White Tank Mountain Regional Park north boundary fence project has taken an important step forward. The pre-bid meeting was a success on February 7th and lead to the acceptance of a bid. The bid was low enough to be able to fence seven miles of the north boundary and further protect the property.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park staff has continued to work with volunteer and scout groups. Border clean up projects and trail marking projects have benefited the park in the month of February.

Park Supervisor Don Harris is working with the City of Surprise on cooperative programming. Staff members from the Surprise Parks and Recreation department have been touring the park.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park staff members have boosted the contacts with Judges and avenues to receive community service workers. On Sunday, February 19th we had fifteen community service workers cleaning and trimming in the park.

Mark Lansing, Park Interpretive Ranger, is the Arizona Parks and Recreation Association Open Space Conference Committee Chairman this year. The Park Supervisor is also on the Arizona Parks and Recreation Association Open Space Committee. The Maricopa County Parks and Recreation department is taking the lead in offering this important conference.

I made a trip to White Tank Mountain Regional Park on February 22 to discuss the possibility of a joint venture with Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department and the Maricopa County Library District. This could lead to some great cooperative programming and public service, should a combination Library and Park Visitor Center be built.

The Park Supervisor attended the second meeting of the El Rio Special District Workgroup. Progress is being made in this large scale open space multi-jurisdictional facility.

The park attendance and camping are picking up and steady in this fine weather. Public programming and outreach are going strong with at least a program a day and 2 a day on weekends.

Park staff have groomed and trimmed 80 % of the roadside and all picnic areas in the park.

Maricopa Trail

The office of the Maricopa County Public Information Officer has been very helpful and supportive of the Maricopa Trail by writing magazine and newspaper articles about it.

Currently the Maricopa County Department of Transportation has completed the plats and legal description engineering documents required for Segment 14 connecting Lake Pleasant Regional Park to I-17, Segments 16 and 18 connecting Anthem to Cave Creek Regional Park and Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area for the Arizona State Land Department right-of-way purchase application process.

The Flood Control District has commenced the Buckeye Area Drainage Master Plan Scoping Phase with John Pucetas of Sitetek which includes provision for inclusion of the Maricopa Trail.

The Town of Cave Creek has stipulated on the Cavaha Springs final plat that the developer will design and construct the regional trail on the recreational trail easement according to Maricopa County Parks and Recreation standards.

Karim Dada, Aztec Engineering design concept study consultant for the City of Phoenix and Syd Anderson from the Avenida Rio Salado project has agreed to include the Maricopa Trail as a Stakeholder in their upcoming planning sessions.

Bryan Lausten, Bureau of Reclamation, has requested information on the regional trail system to include in their upcoming efforts with Salt River Project to provide trail signage for the canals.

Camille Champion, Bureau of Land Management, has received Parks comments on the Arizona Public Service Palo Verde proposed right-of-way to the North Gila Transmission Project.

Ralph Ellis, Arizona Department of Transportation, has agreed to provide a proposed South Mountain Transportation Corridor (202) bridge over a wash at the west end of South Mountain Park to allow for the Maricopa Trail to pass under the proposed freeway. Steve Thomas, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), will include the Maricopa Trail in their EIS (environmental impact statement) for the proposed crossing of the Salt River at the City of Phoenix Tres Rios project.

Jeff Sargent with the City of Peoria, in conjunction with J2 consultants, have presented their Open Space Master Plan Draft for Trails/Parks which includes the Maricopa Trail alignment on the Agua Fria, north of Happy Valley Parkway to Lake Pleasant Regional Park.

Magalie Salas, of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), has requested the Maricopa Trail review, impact and monitoring of their Transwestern Gas Pipeline Lateral Expansion (Phoenix) EIS and proposed land use plan project.

Rick Mellegard, Bureau of Reclamation, is reviewing Parks trail easement proposal for the area below and east of the Dam at Lake Pleasant; Jim Sweeney has received the same proposal to allow a Maricopa Water District bridge crossing.

Marketing Update

The department participated in the 54th Annual Sportsmen's, Vacation and RV Show February 23rd to the 26th at the Civic Plaza. Many system brochures, magnets and trail maps were distributed, along with literature from our sister agencies, regarding biking and rv'ing in the Central Phoenix area. Staff that participated fielded comments and questions regarding the parks. Most frequently we were told how wonderful our parks are and how well we are doing.

Volunteers from the McDowell Park Association staffed a booth at the Fountain Hills Great Fair the same weekend. News coverage indicated they had record attendance at this event as well.

Photos have been provided to Tieken-Moret for development of the mural at the Change of Venue.

A second run of critter brochures is on order. These are extremely popular at the parks. We have six brochures available on Fish, Mammals, Insects, Plants, Birds and Reptiles. Marketing postcards have been ordered for six of the parks, based on the concept initiated at White Tank Mountain Regional Park. These can be mailed to community groups and developments advertising for the park and offering a \$1.00 discount on park entry.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park is the third park to receive an 11x17 folded brochure for their park. These are beginning to replace the white photocopied park maps as our standard.

BOS Updates

The department is grateful to Anne Lynch for her willingness to be reappointed to the PSPRS board. This is scheduled for the March 15, 2006 Board of Supervisor's meeting.

Two major capital items will also be presented to the BOS for approval on March 15, 2006. They are the call for bids for the Estrella Irrigation System improvements and the call for bids for the construction of restrooms, entry stations and monument signs at several of the parks.

The final 5-year renewal for the Paradise Valley golf course will also be presented for approval by the BOS on March 15, 2006.

Contract Updates

Legal discussions continue between attorneys representing Parks, Lake Pleasant Marina Partners LLC and the Pensus Group regarding construction of the new marina. Discussions continue with the Bureau of Reclamation to convey oversight requirements of an additional parcel of land not included in the original land assignment. The parcel is desired for third party development of facilities that will enhance and/or support the recreational activities available at Lake Pleasant Regional Park.

The solar panels have arrived at the Desert Outdoor Center and installation of the Solar HVAC will begin upon arrival of technicians from Austria. The Open House is scheduled for April 18, 2006. To recap, S.O.L.I.D. USA, Inc., the vendor, desires this project to be the "show case" for alternative energy to be used for heating and cooling.

An Agreement has been approved by the Board of Supervisor's between Parks and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District. The Agreement will make Parks eligible for In-Lieu Fee Program where, upon development and approval of Scopes of Work, Parks could receive monies for wetland and/or riparian restoration, creation, enhancement, and preservation of wetlands and other aquatic resources. Implementation requires the signature of the Corps of Engineers. Development of the Scopes of Work continues. Primary focus initially may be in the Agua Fria area of Lake Pleasant Regional Park.

The annual inspection was conducted of The 500 Club Golf Course. The course is well-maintained and managed in a professional manner.

Construction/Design Projects

Buckeye Hills Regional Park Public Shooting Range:

Arrington Watkins Architects, LLC, is 99% complete with the construction documents. The next step will be to apply for a construction grant from the Arizona Game and Fish Department if the infrastructure is built. A coordination meeting has been scheduled on March 8, 2006, with other county departments, such as Facilities, Sheriff, Real Estate, and Legal. The project will include: a multiuse outdoor public shooting range for pistol and rifle, two training ranges, and a range office with a large classroom, retail area and public restrooms. Maricopa County Facilities Management Department has not moved forward with the electrical and water infrastructure of the park.

Buckeye Hills Regional Park Master Plan:

The preplanning has begun and consultant selection process will start in the spring of 2006 in order for the consultant to begin work at the start of the new fiscal year. A scoping meeting with the park supervisors and west side trail planner was conducted before a Request for a Letter of Interest was sent to consultants, which is due February 27, 2006.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park Irrigation System Improvements:

J2 Engineering and Environmental Design were selected to provide irrigation system design, construction documents, and construction administration. The consultant is in the data collection phase and has submitted plans showing existing conditions. Construction is planned to begin in May.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park - SRP 69kV & 12kV Projects:

The park and SRP decided to postpone the hydro seeding along the 69kV alignment until the monsoon season or if rain comes before the summer. Other plant material has been replaced.

Restroom Improvements 2005:

Niche Contractors Inc. is the general contractor for The Restroom, Ramada and Entry Station Improvement Project. The concrete floor slabs have been poured and the walls are being erected at each site.

Usery Mountain Regional Park Water System Improvements:

HDR Engineering was selected to provide water system engineering and construction administration. The request for the City of Mesa to provide water to the park was approved by the City of Mesa Utilities Committee on February 6, 2006.

Fencing at San Tan and White Tank Mountain Regional Parks:

A bid opening was held on February 21 and construction will soon start at White Tank then San Tan. The project includes 7 miles of barb wire fence along the north boundary of White Tank, and 8 miles of barb wire fence around the north finger of San Tan.